RAB AND MARJORIE

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AND

Marjorie Fleming.

BY

JOHN BROWN, M.D.

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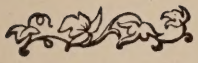

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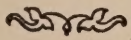

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RAB AND HIS FRIENDS.

TO

MY TWO FRIENDS

At Busby, Renfrewshire,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF A JOURNEY FROM CARSTAIRS JUNCTION TO TOLEDO AND BACK,

This Story

OF

"RAB AND HIS FRIENDS"

IS INSCRIBED.

RAB AND HIS FRIENDS.

FOUR-AND-THIRTY years ago, Bob Ainslie and I were coming up Infirmary Street from the Edinburgh High School, our heads together, and our arms intertwisted, as only lovers and boys know how, or why.

When we got to the top of the street, and turned north, we espied a crowd at the Tron Church. "A dog-fight!" shouted Bob, and was off; and so was I, both of us all but praying that it might not be over before we got up! And is not this boy-nature? and human nature too? and don't we all wish a house on fire not to be out before we see it? Dogs like fighting; old Isaac says they "delight" in it, and for the best of all reasons; and boys are not cruel because they like to see the fight. They see three of the great cardinal virtues of dog

or man — courage, endurance, and skill — in intense action. This is very different from a love of making dogs fight, and enjoying, and aggravating, and making gain by their pluck. A boy, be he ever so fond himself of fighting, if he be a good boy, hates and despises all this, but he would have run off with Bob and me fast enough: it is a natural, and a not wicked interest, that all boys and men have in witnessing intense energy in action.

Does any curious and finely ignorant woman wish to know how Bob's eye at a glance announced a dog-fight to his brain? He did not, he could not see the dogs fighting; it was a flash of an inference, a rapid induction. The crowd round a couple of dogs fighting is a crowd masculine mainly, with an occasional active, compassionate woman, fluttering wildly round the outside, and using her tongue and her hands freely upon the men, as so many "brutes"; it is a crowd annular, compact, and mobile; a crowd centripetal, having its eyes and its heads all bent downwards and inwards, to one common focus.

Well, Bob and I are up, and find it is not over: a small, thoroughbred, white bull-terrier is busy throttling a large shepherd's dog, unac-

customed to war, but not to be trifled with. They are hard at it; the scientific little fellow doing his work in great style, his pastoral enemy fighting wildly, but with the sharpest of teeth and a great courage. Science and breeding, however, soon had their own; the Game Chicken, as the premature Bob called him, working his way up, took his final grip of poor Yarrow's throat, — and he lay gasping and done for. His master, a brown, handsome, big young shepherd from Tweedsmuir, would have liked to have knocked down any man, would "drink up Esil, or eat a crocodile," for that part, if he had a chance: it was no use kicking the little dog; that would only make him hold the closer. Many were the means shouted out in mouthfuls, of the best possible ways of ending it. "Water!" but there was none near, and many cried for it who might have got it from the well at Blackfriars Wynd. "Bite the tail!" and a large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged man, more desirous than wise, with some struggle got the bushy end of *Yarrow's* tail into his ample mouth, and bit it with all his might. This was more than enough for the much-enduring, much-perspiring shepherd, who, with a gleam of joy over his broad visage, delivered

a terrific facer upon our large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged friend, — who went down like a shot.

Still the Chicken holds; death not far off. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" observed a calm, highly dressed young buck, with an eye-glass in his eye. "Snuff, indeed!" growled the angry crowd, affronted and glaring. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" again observes the buck, but with more urgency; whereon were produced several open boxes, and from a mull which may have been at Culloden, he took a pinch, knelt down, and presented it to the nose of the Chicken. The laws of physiology and of snuff take their course; the Chicken sneezes, and Yarrow is free!

The young pastoral giant stalks off with Yarrow in his arms, — comforting him.

But the Bull Terrier's blood is up, and his soul unsatisfied; he grips the first dog he meets, and discovering she is not a dog, in Homeric phrase, he makes a brief sort of *amende*, and is off. The boys, with Bob and me at their head, are after him: down Niddry Street he goes, bent on mischief; up the Cowgate like an arrow, — Bob and I, and our small men, panting behind.

There, under the single arch of the South Bridge, is a huge mastiff, sauntering down the middle of the causeway, as if with his hands in his pockets: he is old, gray, brindled, as big as a little Highland bull, and has the Shakespearian dewlaps shaking as he goes.

The Chicken makes straight at him, and fastens on his throat. To our astonishment, the great creature does nothing but stand still, hold himself up, and roar, — yes, roar; a long, serious, remonstrative roar. How is this? Bob and I are up to them. *He is muzzled!* The bailies had proclaimed a general muzzling, and his master, studying strength and economy mainly, had encompassed his huge jaws in a home-made apparatus, constructed out of the leather of some ancient *breechin.* His mouth was open as far as it could; his lips curled up in rage, — a sort of terrible grin; his teeth gleaming, ready, from out the darkness; the strap across his mouth tense as a bowstring; his whole frame stiff with indignation and surprise; his roar asking us all round, "Did you ever see the like of this?" He looked a statue of anger and astonishment, done in Aberdeen granite.

We soon had a crowd: the Chicken held on. "A knife!" cried Bob; and a cobbler

gave him his knife: you know the kind of knife, worn away obliquely to a point, and always keen. I put its edge to the tense leather; it ran before it; and then! — one sudden jerk of that enormous head, a sort of dirty mist about his mouth, no noise, — and the bright and fierce little fellow is dropped, limp and dead. A solemn pause: this was more than any of us had bargained for. I turned the little fellow over, and saw he was quite dead; the mastiff had taken him by the small of the back like a rat, and broken it.

He looked down at his victim appeased, ashamed, and amazed; snuffed him all over, stared at him, and taking a sudden thought, turned round and trotted off. Bob took the dead dog up, and said, "John, we 'll bury him after tea." "Yes," said I, and was off after the mastiff. He made up the Cowgate at a rapid swing; he had forgotten some engagement. He turned up the Candlemaker Row, and stopped at the Harrow Inn.

There was a carrier's cart ready to start, and a keen, thin, impatient, black-a-vised little man, his hand at his gray horse's head, looking about angrily for something.

"Rab, ye thief!" said he, aiming a kick at

my great friend, who drew cringing up, and avoiding the heavy shoe with more agility than dignity, and watching his master's eye, slunk dismayed under the cart, — his ears down, and as much as he had of tail down too.

What a man this must be, — thought I, — to whom my tremendous hero turns tail! The carrier saw the muzzle hanging, cut and useless, from his neck, and I eagerly told him the story, which Bob and I always thought, and still think, Homer, or King David, or Sir Walter alone were worthy to rehearse. The severe little man was mitigated, and condescended to say, "Rab, my man, puir Rabbie," — whereupon the stump of a tail rose up, the ears were cocked, the eyes filled, and were comforted; the two friends were reconciled. "Hupp!" and a stroke of the whip were given to Jess; and off went the three.

Bob and I buried the Game Chicken that night (we had not much of a tea) in the back-green of his house in Melville Street, No. 17, with considerable gravity and silence; and being at the time in the Iliad, and, like all boys, Trojans, we called him Hector, of course.

Six years have passed, — a long time for a boy and a dog: Bob Ainslie is off to the wars; I am a medical student, and clerk at Minto House Hospital.

Rab I saw almost every week, on the Wednesday; and we had much pleasant intimacy. I found the way to his heart by frequent scratching of his huge head, and an occasional bone. When I did not notice him he would plant himself straight before me, and stand wagging that bud of a tail, and looking up, with his head a little to the one side. His master I occasionally saw; he used to call me "Maister John," but was laconic as any Spartan.

One fine October afternoon, I was leaving the hospital, when I saw the large gate open, and in walked Rab, with that great and easy saunter of his. He looked as if taking general possession of the place; like the Duke of Wellington entering a subdued city, satiated with victory and peace. After him came Jess, now white from age, with her cart; and in it a woman, carefully wrapped up, — the carrier leading the horse anxiously, and looking back. When he saw me, James (for his name was James Noble) made a curt and grotesque "boo," and said, "Maister John, this is the mistress; she 's got

trouble in her breest, — some kind o' an income we 're thinkin'."

By this time I saw the woman's face; she was sitting on a sack filled with straw, her husband's plaid round her, and his big-coat, with its large white metal buttons, over her feet.

I never saw a more unforgetable face, — pale, serious, *lonely*,* delicate, sweet, without being at all what we call fine. She looked sixty, and had on a mutch, white as snow, with its black ribbon; her silvery, smooth hair setting off her dark-gray eyes, — eyes such as one sees only twice or thrice in a lifetime, full of suffering, full also of the overcoming of it: her eyebrows black and delicate, and her mouth firm, patient, and contented, which few mouths ever are.

As I have said, I never saw a more beautiful countenance, or one more subdued to settled quiet. "Ailie," said James, "this is Maister John, the young doctor; Rab's freend, ye ken. We often speak aboot you, doctor." She smiled, and made a movement, but said nothing; and prepared to come down, putting her plaid aside and rising. Had Solomon, in all his glory, been handing down the Queen of Sheba at his

* It is not easy giving this look by one word; it was expressive of her being so much of her life alone.

palace gate, he could not have done it more daintily, more tenderly, more like a gentleman, than did James the Howgate carrier, when he lifted down Ailie his wife. The contrast of his small, swarthy, weather-beaten, keen, worldly face to hers — pale, subdued, and beautiful — was something wonderful. Rab looked on concerned and puzzled, but ready for anything that might turn up, — were it to strangle the nurse, the porter, or even me. Ailie and he seemed great friends.

"As I was sayin', she 's got a kind o' trouble in her breest, doctor; wull ye tak' a look at it?" We walked into the consulting-room, all four; Rab grim and comic, willing to be happy and confidential if cause could be shown, willing also to be the reverse, on the same terms. Ailie sat down, undid her open gown and her lawn handkerchief round her neck, and without a word showed me her right breast. I looked at and examined it carefully, — she and James watching me, and Rab eying all three. What could I say? there it was, that had once been so soft, so shapely, so white, so gracious and bountiful, so "full of all blessed conditions," — hard as a stone, a centre of horrid pain, making that pale face, with its gray,

lucid, reasonable eyes, and its sweet, resolved mouth, express the full measure of suffering overcome. Why was that gentle, modest, sweet woman, clean and lovable, condemned by God to bear such a burden?

I got her away to bed. "May Rab and me bide?" said James. "*You* may; and Rab, if he will behave himself." "I 'se warrant he 's do that, doctor"; and in slank the faithful beast. I wish you could have seen him. There are no such dogs now. He belonged to a lost tribe. As I have said, he was brindled and gray like Rubislaw granite; his hair short, hard, and close, like a lion's; his body thick-set, like a little bull, — a sort of compressed Hercules of a dog. He must have been ninety pounds' weight, at the least; he had a large blunt head; his muzzle black as night, his mouth blacker than any night, a tooth or too — being all he had — gleaming out of his jaws of darkness. His head was scarred with the records of old wounds, a sort of series of fields of battle all over it; one eye out, one ear cropped as close as was Archbishop Leighton's father's; the remaining eye had the power of two; and above it, and in constant communication with it, was a tattered rag of an ear, which

was forever unfurling itself, like an old flag; and then that bud of a tail, about one inch long, if it could in any sense be said to be long, being as broad as long, — the mobility, the instantaneousness of that bud were very funny and surprising, and its expressive twinklings and winkings, the intercommunications between the eye, the ear, and it, were of the oddest and swiftest.

Rab had the dignity and simplicity of great size; and having fought his way all along the road to absolute supremacy, he was as mighty in his own line as Julius Cæsar or the Duke of Wellington, and had the gravity * of all great fighters.

You must have often observed the likeness of certain men to certain animals, and of certain dogs to men. Now, I never looked at Rab without thinking of the great Baptist preacher, Andrew Fuller.† The same large,

* A Highland game-keeper, when asked why a certain terrier, of singular pluck, was so much more solemn than the other dogs, said, "O, sir, life 's full o' sairiousness to him, — he just never can get enuff o' fechtin'."

† Fuller was, in early life, when a farmer lad at Soham, famous as a boxer; not quarrelsome, but not without "the stern delight" a man of strength and courage feels in their exercise. Dr. Charles Stewart, of Dunearn, whose rare gifts and graces as a physician, a divine, a scholar, and a gentle-

heavy, menacing, combative, sombre, honest countenance, the same deep inevitable eye, the same look, — as of thunder asleep, but ready, — neither a dog nor a man to be trifled with.

Next day, my master, the surgeon, examined Ailie. There was no doubt it must kill her, and soon. It could be removed — it might never return — it would give her speedy relief — she should have it done. She courtesied, looked at James, and said, "When?" "To-morrow," said the kind surgeon, — a man of few words. She and James and Rab and I retired. I noticed that he and she spoke little, but seemed to anticipate everything in each other. The following day, at noon, the students came in, hurrying up the great stair. At the first landing-place, on a small, well-known blackboard, was a bit of paper fastened by wafers, and many remains of old wafers

man live only in the memory of those few who knew and survive him, liked to tell how Mr. Fuller used to say, that when he was in the pulpit, and saw a *buirdly* man come along the passage, he would instinctively draw himself up, measure his imaginary antagonist, and forecast how he would deal with him, his hands meanwhile condensing into fists, and tending to "square." He must have been a hard hitter if he boxed as he preached, — what "The Fancy" would call "an ugly customer."

beside it. On the paper were the words, — "An operation to-day. J. B. *Clerk*."

Up ran the youths, eager to secure good places: in they crowded, full of interest and talk. "What 's the case?" "Which side is it?"

Don't think them heartless; they are neither better nor worse than you or I; they get over their professional horrors, and into their proper work, — and in them pity, as an *emotion*, ending in itself or at best in tears and a long-drawn breath, lessens, while pity as a *motive* is quickened, and gains power and purpose. It is well for poor human nature that it is so.

The operating theatre is crowded; much talk and fun, and all the cordiality and stir of youth. The surgeon with his staff of assistants is there. In comes Ailie: one look at her quiets and abates the eager students. That beautiful old woman is too much for them; they sit down, and are dumb, and gaze at her. These rough boys feel the power of her presence. She walks in quickly, but without haste; dressed in her mutch, her neckerchief, her white dimity short-gown, her black bombazine petticoat, showing her white worsted stockings and her carpet-shoes. Behind her was James

with Rab. James sat down in the distance, and took that huge and noble head between his knees. Rab looked perplexed and dangerous; forever cocking his ear and dropping it as fast.

Ailie stepped up on a seat, and laid herself on the table, as her friend the surgeon told her; arranged herself, gave a rapid look at James, shut her eyes, rested herself on me, and took my hand. The operation was at once begun; it was necessarily slow; and chloroform — one of God's best gifts to his suffering children — was then unknown. The surgeon did his work. The pale face showed its pain, but was still and silent. Rab's soul was working within him; he saw that something strange was going on, — blood flowing from his mistress, and she suffering; his ragged ear was up, and importunate; he growled, and gave now and then a sharp, impatient yelp; he would have liked to have done something to that man. But James had him firm, and gave him a *glower* from time to time, and an intimation of a possible kick; — all the better for James, it kept his eye and his mind off Ailie.

It is over: she is dressed, steps gently and decently down from the table, looks for James;

then turning to the surgeon and the students, she courtesies, — and in a low, clear voice, begs their pardon if she has behaved ill. The students — all of us — wept like children; the surgeon happed her up carefully, — and, resting on James and me, Ailie went to her room, Rab following. We put her to bed. James took off his heavy shoes, crammed with tackets, heel-capt and toe-capt, and put them carefully under the table, saying, "Maister John, I'm for nane o' yer strynge nurse bodies for Ailie. I'll be her nurse, and I'll gang aboot on my stockin' soles as canny as pussy." And so he did; and handy and clever, and swift and tender as any woman, was that horny-handed, snell, peremptory little man. Everything she got he gave her: he seldom slept; and often I saw his small shrewd eyes out of the darkness, fixed on her. As before, they spoke little.

Rab behaved well, never moving, showing us how meek and gentle he could be, and occasionally, in his sleep, letting us know that he was demolishing some adversary. He took a walk with me every day, generally to the Candlemaker Row; but he was sombre and mild; declined doing battle, though some fit cases

offered, and indeed submitted to sundry indignities; and was always very ready to turn, and came faster back, and trotted up the stair with much lightness, and went straight to that door.

Jess, the mare, had been sent, with her weather-worn cart, to Howgate, and had doubtless her own dim and placid meditations and confusions, on the absence of her master and Rab, and her unnatural freedom from the road and her cart.

For some days Ailie did well. The wound healed "by the first intention"; for, as James said, "Oor Ailie's skin 's ower clean to beil." The students came in quiet and anxious, and surrounded her bed. She said she liked to see their young, honest faces. The surgeon dressed her, and spoke to her in his own short, kind way, pitying her through his eyes, Rab and James outside the circle, — Rab being now reconciled, and even cordial, and having made up his mind that as yet nobody required worrying, but, as you may suppose, *semper paratus*.

So far well: but, four days after the operation, my patient had a sudden and long shivering, a "groosin'," as she called it. I saw her soon after; her eyes were too bright, her cheek

colored; she was restless, and ashamed of being so; the balance was lost; mischief had begun. On looking at the wound, a blush of red told the secret: her pulse was rapid, her breathing anxious and quick, she was n't herself, as she said, and was vexed at her restlessness. We tried what we could. James did everything, was everywhere; never in the way, never out of it; Rab subsided under the table into a dark place, and was motionless, all but his eye, which followed every one. Ailie got worse; began to wander in her mind, gently; was more demonstrative in her ways to James, rapid in her questions, and sharp at times. He was vexed, and said, "She was never that way afore; no, never." For a time she knew her head was wrong, and was always asking our pardon, — the dear, gentle old woman: then delirium set in strong, without pause. Her brain gave way, and then came that terrible spectacle, —

> "The intellectual power, through words and things,
> Went sounding on its dim and perilous way";

she sang bits of old songs and Psalms, stopping suddenly, mingling the Psalms of David and the diviner words of his Son and Lord

with homely odds and ends and scraps of ballads.

Nothing more touching, or in a sense more strangely beautiful, did I ever witness. Her tremulous, rapid, affectionate, eager Scotch voice, — the swift, aimless, bewildered mind, the baffled utterance, the bright and perilous eye; some wild words, some household cares, something for James, the names of the dead, Rab called rapidly and in a "fremyt" voice, and he starting up surprised, and slinking off as if he were to blame somehow, or had been dreaming he heard; many eager questions and beseechings which James and I could make nothing of, and on which she seemed to set her all, and then sink back ununderstood. It was very sad, but better than many things that are not called sad. James hovered about, put out and miserable, but active and exact as ever; read to her, when there was a lull, short bits from the Psalms, prose and metre, chanting the latter in his own rude and serious way, showing great knowledge of the fit words, bearing up like a man, and doating over her as his "ain Ailie." "Ailie, ma woman!" "Ma ain bonnie wee dawtie!"

The end was drawing on: the golden bowl

was breaking; the silver cord was fast being loosed, — that *animula blandula, vagula, hospes, comesque*, was about to flee. The body and the soul — companions for sixty years — were being sundered, and taking leave. She was walking alone through the valley of that shadow into which one day we must all enter, — and yet she was not alone, for we know whose rod and staff were comforting her.

One night she had fallen quiet, and, as we hoped, asleep; her eyes were shut. We put down the gas, and sat watching her. Suddenly she sat up in bed, and taking a bedgown which was lying on it rolled up, she held it eagerly to her breast, — to the right side. We could see her eyes bright with a surprising tenderness and joy, bending over this bundle of clothes. She held it as a woman holds her sucking child; opening out her nightgown impatiently, and holding it close, and brooding over it, and murmuring foolish little words, as over one whom his mother comforteth, and who sucks and is satisfied. It was pitiful and strange to see her wasted dying look, keen and yet vague, — her immense love.

"Preserve me!" groaned James, giving way. And then she rocked back and forward,

as if to make it sleep, hushing it, and wasting on it her infinite fondness. "Wae 's me, doctor; I declare she 's thinkin' it 's that bairn." "What bairn?" "The only bairn we ever had; our wee Mysie, and she 's in the Kingdom, forty years and mair." It was plainly true: the pain in the breast, telling its urgent story to a bewildered, ruined brain, was misread and mistaken; it suggested to her the uneasiness of a breast full of milk, and then the child; and so again once more they were together, and she had her ain wee Mysie in her bosom.

This was the close. She sank rapidly: the delirium left her; but, as she whispered, she was "clean silly"; it was the lightening before the final darkness. After having for some time lain still, her eyes shut, she said, "James!" He came close to her, and lifting up her calm, clear, beautiful eyes, she gave him a long look, turned to me kindly but shortly, looked for Rab but could not see him, then turned to her husband again, as if she would never leave off looking, shut her eyes, and composed herself. She lay for some time breathing quick, and passed away so gently, that when we thought she was gone, James, in

his old-fashioned way, held the mirror to her face. After a long pause, one small spot of dimness was breathed out; it vanished away, and never returned, leaving the blank clear darkness of the mirror without a stain. "What is our life? it is even a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Rab all this time had been full awake and motionless; he came forward beside us: Ailie's hand, which James had held, was hanging down; it was soaked with his tears; Rab licked it all over carefully, looked at her, and returned to his place under the table.

James and I sat, I don't know how long, but for some time, — saying nothing: he started up abruptly, and with some noise went to the table, and putting his right fore and middle fingers each into a shoe, pulled them out, and put them on, breaking one of the leather latchets, and muttering in anger, "I never did the like o' that afore!"

I believe he never did; nor after either. "Rab!" he said roughly, and pointing with his thumb to the bottom of the bed. Rab leapt up, and settled himself; his head and eye to the dead face. "Maister John, ye'll wait for me," said the carrier; and disappeared

in the darkness, thundering down stairs in his heavy shoes. I ran to a front window; there he was, already round the house, and out at the gate, fleeing like a shadow.

I was afraid about him, and yet not afraid; so I sat down beside Rab, and being wearied, fell asleep. I awoke from a sudden noise outside. It was November, and there had been a heavy fall of snow. Rab was *in statu quo;* he heard the noise too, and plainly knew it, but never moved. I looked out; and there, at the gate, in the dim morning — for the sun was not up — was Jess and the cart, — a cloud of steam rising from the old mare. I did not see James; he was already at the door, and came up the stairs, and met me. It was less than three hours since he left, and he must have posted out — who knows how? — to Howgate, full nine miles off, yoked Jess, and driven her astonished into town. He had an armful of blankets, and was streaming with perspiration. He nodded to me, spread out on the floor two pairs of clean old blankets having at their corners, "A. G., 1794," in large letters in red worsted. These were the initials of Alison Græme, and James may have looked in at her from without, — himself un-

seen but not unthought of, — when he was "wat, wat, and weary," and after having walked many a mile over the hills, may have seen her sitting, while "a' the lave were sleepin'"; and by the firelight working her name on the blankets, for her ain James's bed.

He motioned Rab down, and taking his wife in his arms, laid her in the blankets, and happed her carefully and firmly up, leaving the face uncovered; and then lifting her, he nodded again sharply to me, and with a resolved but utterly miserable face strode along the passage, and down stairs, followed by Rab. I followed with a light; but he did n't need it. I went out, holding stupidly the candle in my hand in the calm frosty air; we were soon at the gate. I could have helped him, but I saw he was not to be meddled with, and he was strong, and did not need it. He laid her down as tenderly, as safely, as he had lifted her out ten days before, — as tenderly as when he had her first in his arms when she was only "A. G.," — sorted her, leaving that beautiful sealed face open to the heavens; and then taking Jess by the head, he moved away. He did not notice me, neither did Rab, who presided behind the cart. I stood till they passed through the long

shadow of the College, and turned up Nicolson Street. I heard the solitary cart sound through the streets, and die away and come again; and I returned, thinking of that company going up Libberton Brae, then along Roslin Muir, the morning light touching the Pentlands and making them like on-looking ghosts; then down the hill through Auchindinny woods, past "haunted Woodhouselee"; and as daybreak came sweeping up the bleak Lammermuirs, and fell on his own door, the company would stop, and James would take the key, and lift Ailie up again, laying her on her own bed, and, having put Jess up, would return with Rab and shut the door.

James buried his wife, with his neighbors mourning, Rab inspecting the solemnity from a distance. It was snow, and that black ragged hole would look strange in the midst of the swelling spotless cushion of white. James looked after everything; then rather suddenly fell ill, and took to bed; was insensible when the doctor came, and soon died. A sort of low fever was prevailing in the village, and his want of sleep, his exhaustion, and his misery made him apt to take it. The grave was not difficult to reopen. A fresh fall of snow had

again made all things white and smooth; Rab once more looked on, and slunk home to the stable.

And what of Rab? I asked for him next week at the new carrier who got the good-will of James's business, and was now master of Jess and her cart. "How's Rab?" He put me off, and said rather rudely, "What's *your* business wi' the dowg?" I was not to be so put off. "Where's Rab?" He, getting confused and red, and intermeddling with his hair, said, "'Deed, sir, Rab's deid." "Dead! what did he die of?" "Weel, sir," said he, getting redder, "he didna exactly dee; he was killed. I had to brain him wi' a rack-pin; there was nae doin' wi' him. He lay in the treviss wi' the mear, and wadna come oot. I tempit him wi' kail and meat, but he wad tak naething, and keepit me frae feedin' the beast, and he was aye gur gurrin', and grup gruppin' me by the legs. I was laith to make awa wi' the auld dowg, his like wasna atween this and Thornhill, — but, 'deed, sir, I could do naething else." I believed him. Fit end for Rab, quick and complete. His teeth and his friends gone, why should he keep the peace, and be civil?

MARJORIE FLEMING.

TO

MISS FLEMING,

TO WHOM I AM INDEBTED FOR ALL ITS MATERIALS,

This Memorial

OF HER DEAR AND UNFORGOTTEN

MAIDIE

IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED.

MARJORIE FLEMING.

ONE November afternoon in 1810 — the year in which *Waverley* was resumed and laid aside again, to be finished off, its last two volumes in three weeks, and made immortal in 1814, and when its author, by the death of Lord Melville, narrowly escaped getting a civil appointment in India — three men, evidently lawyers, might have been seen escaping like school-boys from the Parliament House, and speeding arm-in-arm down Bank Street and the Mound, in the teeth of a surly blast of sleet.

The three friends sought the *bield* of the low wall old Edinburgh boys remember well, and sometimes miss now, as they struggle with the stout west-wind.

The three were curiously unlike each other. One, "a little man of feeble make, who would

be unhappy if his pony got beyond a foot pace," slight, with "small, elegant features, hectic cheek, and soft hazel eyes, the index of the quick, sensitive spirit within, as if he had the warm heart of a woman, her genuine enthusiasm, and some of her weaknesses." Another, as unlike a woman as a man can be; homely, almost common, in look and figure; his hat and his coat, and indeed his entire covering, worn to the quick, but all of the best material; what redeemed him from vulgarity and meanness were his eyes, deep set, heavily thatched, keen, hungry, shrewd, with a slumbering glow far in, as if they could be dangerous; a man to care nothing for at first glance, but somehow to give a second and not-forgetting look at. The third was the biggest of the three, and though lame, nimble, and all rough and alive with power, had you met him anywhere else, you would say he was a Liddesdale store-farmer, come of gentle blood; "a stout, blunt carle," as he says of himself, with the swing and stride and the eye of a man of the hills, — a large, sunny, out-of-door air all about him. On his broad and somewhat stooping shoulders was set that head which, with Shakespeare's and Bonaparte's, is the best known in all the world.

He was in high spirits, keeping his companions and himself in roars of laughter, and every now and then seizing them, and stopping, that they might take their fill of the fun; there they stood shaking with laughter, "not an inch of their body free" from its grip. At George Street they parted, one to Rose Court, behind St. Andrew's Church, one to Albany Street, the other, our big and limping friend, to Castle Street.

We need hardly give their names. The first was William Erskine, afterwards Lord Kinneder, chased out of the world by a calumny, killed by its foul breath, —

> "And at the touch of wrong, without a strife,
> Slipped in a moment out of life."

There is nothing in literature more beautiful or more pathetic than Scott's love and sorrow for this friend of his youth.

The second was William Clerk, — the *Darsie Latimer* of *Redgauntlet;* "a man," as Scott says, "of the most acute intellects and powerful apprehension," but of more powerful indolence, so as to leave the world with little more than the report of what he might have been, — a humorist as genuine, though not quite so

savagely Swiftian as his brother, Lord Eldin, neither of whom had much of that commonest and best of all the humors, called good.

The third we all know. What has he not done for every one of us? Who else ever, except Shakespeare, so diverted mankind, entertained and entertains a world so liberally, so wholesomely? We are fain to say, not even Shakespeare, for his is something deeper than diversion, something higher than pleasure, and yet who would care to split this hair?

Had any one watched him closely before and after the parting, what a change he would see! The bright, broad laugh, the shrewd, jovial word, the man of the Parliament House and of the world; and next step, moody, the light of his eye withdrawn, as if seeing things that were invisible; his shut mouth, like a child's, so impressionable, so innocent, so sad; he was now all within, as before he was all without; hence his brooding look. As the snow blattered in his face, he muttered, "How it raves and drifts! On-ding o' snaw, — ay, that 's the word, — on-ding —" He was now at his own door, "Castle Street, No. 39." He opened the door, and went straight to his den; that wondrous workshop, where, in one year, 1823, when he

was fifty-two, he wrote *Peveril of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward*, and *St. Ronan's Well*, besides much else. We once took the foremost of our novelists, the greatest, we would say, since Scott, into this room, and could not but mark the solemnizing effect of sitting where the great magician sat so often and so long, and looking out upon that little shabby bit of sky and that back green, where faithful Camp lies.*

He sat down in his large green morocco elbow-chair, drew himself close to his table, and glowered and gloomed at his writing apparatus, "a very handsome old box, richly carved, lined with crimson velvet, and containing ink-bottles, taper-stand, etc., in silver, the whole in such order that it might have come from the silversmith's window half an hour before." He took out his paper, then starting up angrily, said, "'Go spin, you jade, go spin.' No, d— it, it won't do, —

* This favorite dog "died about January, 1809, and was buried in a fine moonlight night in the little garden behind the house in Castle Street. My wife tells me she remembers the whole family in tears about the grave as her father himself smoothed the turf above Camp, with the saddest face she had ever seen. He had been engaged to dine abroad that day, but apologized, on account of the death of 'a dear old friend.'" — LOCKHART'S *Life of Scott*.

'My spinnin' wheel is auld and stiff,
The rock o't wunna stand, sir,
To keep the temper-pin in tiff
Employs ower aft my hand, sir.'

I am off the fang.* I can make nothing of *Waverley* to-day; I 'll awa' to Marjorie. Come wi' me, Maida, you thief." The great creature rose slowly, and the pair were off, Scott taking a *maud* (a plaid) with him. "White as a frosted plum-cake, by jingo!" said he, when he got to the street. Maida gambolled and whisked among the snow, and his master strode across to Young Street, and through it to 1 North Charlotte Street, to the house of his dear friend, Mrs. William Keith, of Corstorphine Hill, niece of Mrs. Keith, of Ravelston, of whom he said at her death, eight years after, "Much tradition, and that of the best, has died with this excellent old lady, one of the few persons whose spirits and *cleanliness* and freshness of mind and body made old age lovely and desirable."

Sir Walter was in that house almost every day, and had a key, so in he and the hound went, shaking themselves in the lobby. "Mar-

* Applied to a pump when it is dry, and its valve has lost its "fang"; from the German *fangen*, to hold.

jorie! Marjorie!" shouted her friend, "where are ye, my bonnie wee croodlin doo?" In a moment a bright, eager child of seven was in his arms, and he was kissing her all over. Out came Mrs. Keith. "Come yer ways in, Wattie." "No, not now. I am going to take Marjorie wi' me, and you may come to your tea in Duncan Roy's sedan, and bring the bairn home in your lap." "Tak' Marjorie, and it *on-ding o' snaw!*" said Mrs. Keith. He said to himself, "On-ding, — that 's odd, — that is the very word." "Hoot, awa! look here," and he displayed the corner of his plaid, made to hold lambs (the true shepherd's plaid, consisting of two breadths sewed together, and uncut at one end, making a poke or *cul de sac*). "Tak' yer lamb," said she, laughing at the contrivance; and so the Pet was first well happit up, and then put, laughing silently, into the plaid neuk, and the shepherd strode off with his lamb, — Maida gambolling through the snow, and running races in her mirth.

Did n't he face "the angry airt," and make her bield his bosom, and into his own room with her, and lock the door, and out with the warm, rosy little wifie, who took it all with great composure! There the two remained

for three or more hours, making the house ring with their laughter; you can fancy the big man's and Maidie's laugh. Having made the fire cheery, he set her down in his ample chair, and standing sheepishly before her, began to say his lesson, which happened to be, — "Ziccotty, diccotty, dock, the mouse ran up the clock, the clock struck wan, down the mouse ran, ziccotty, diccotty, dock." This done repeatedly till she was pleased, she gave him his new lesson, gravely and slowly, timing it upon her small fingers, — he saying it after her, —

> "Wonery, twoery, tickery, seven;
> Alibi, crackaby, ten, and eleven;
> Pin, pan, musky, dan;
> Tweedle-um, twoddle-um,
> Twenty-wan; eerie, orie, ourie,
> You, are, out."

He pretended to great difficulty, and she rebuked him with most comical gravity, treating him as a child. He used to say that when he came to Alibi Crackaby he broke down, and Pin-Pan, Musky-Dan, Tweedle-um Twoddle-um made him roar with laughter. He said *Musky-Dan* especially was beyond endurance, bringing up an Irishman and his hat fresh from the Spice Islands and odoriferous Ind; she getting quite

bitter in her displeasure at his ill-behavior and stupidness.

Then he would read ballads to her in his own glorious way, the two getting wild with excitement over *Gil Morrice* or the *Baron of Smailholm;* and he would take her on his knee, and make her repeat Constance's speeches in *King John,* till he swayed to and fro, sobbing his fill. Fancy the gifted little creature, like one possessed, repeating, —

"For I am sick, and capable of fears,
Oppressed with wrong, and therefore full of fears;
A widow, husbandless, subject to fears;
A woman, naturally born to fears."

"If thou that bidst me be content, wert grim,
Ugly and slanderous to thy mother's womb,
Lame, foolish, crooked, swart, prodigious —"

Or, drawing herself up "to the height of her great argument," —

"I will instruct my sorrows to be proud,
For grief is proud, and makes his owner stout.
Here I and sorrow sit."

Scott used to say that he was amazed at her power over him, saying to Mrs. Keith, "She 's the most extraordinary creature I ever met with, and her repeating of Shakespeare overpowers me as nothing else does."

Thanks to the unforgetting sister of this dear child, who has much of the sensibility and fun of her who has been in her small grave these fifty and more years, we have now before us the letters and journals of Pet Marjorie, — before us lies and gleams her rich brown hair, bright and sunny as if yesterday's, with the words on the paper, "Cut out in her last illness," and two pictures of her by her beloved Isabella, whom she worshipped; there are the faded old scraps of paper, hoarded still, over which her warm breath and her warm little heart had poured themselves; there is the old water-mark, "Lingard, 1808." The two portraits are very like each other, but plainly done at different times; it is a chubby, healthy face, deep-set, brooding eyes, as eager to tell what is going on within as to gather in all the glories from without; quick with the wonder and the pride of life; they are eyes that would not be soon satisfied with seeing; eyes that would devour their object, and yet childlike and fearless; and that is a mouth that will not be soon satisfied with love; it has a curious likeness to Scott's own, which has always appeared to us his sweetest, most mobile and speaking feature.

There she is, looking straight at us as she did at him, — fearless and full of love, passionate, wild, wilful, fancy's child. One cannot look at it without thinking of Wordsworth's lines on poor Hartley Coleridge : —

"O blessed vision, happy child!
Thou art so exquisitely wild,
I thought of thee with many fears,
Of what might be thy lot in future years.
I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,
Lord of thy house and hospitality ;
And Grief, uneasy lover ! ne'er at rest,
But when she sat within the touch of thee.
O, too industrious folly !
O, vain and causeless melancholy !
Nature will either end thee quite,
Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,
Preserve for thee by individual right
A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flock."

And we can imagine Scott, when holding his warm, plump little playfellow in his arms, repeating that stately friend's lines : —

"Loving she is, and tractable, though wild,
And Innocence hath privilege in her,
To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes,
And feats of cunning ; and the pretty round
Of trespasses, affected to provoke
Mock chastisement and partnership in play.
And, as a fagot sparkles on the hearth,
Not less if unattended and alone,
Than when both young and old sit gathered round,

> And take delight in its activity,
> Even so this happy creature of herself
> Is all-sufficient; solitude to her
> Is blithe society; she fills the air
> With gladness and involuntary songs."

But we will let her disclose herself. We need hardly say that all this is true, and that these letters are as really Marjorie's as was this light brown hair; indeed, you could as easily fabricate the one as the other.

There was an old servant, Jeanie Robertson, who was forty years in her grandfather's family. Marjorie Fleming, or, as she is called in the letters, and by Sir Walter, Maidie, was the last child she kept. Jeanie's wages never exceeded £3 a year, and, when she left service, she had saved £40. She was devotedly attached to Maidie, rather despising and ill-using her sister Isabella, — a beautiful and gentle child. This partiality made Maidie apt at times to domineer over Isabella. "I mention this" (writes her surviving sister) "for the purpose of telling you an instance of Maidie's generous justice. When only five years old, when walking in Raith grounds, the two children had run on before, and old Jeanie remembered they might come too near a dangerous mill-lade. She called to them to turn back.

Maidie heeded her not, rushed all the faster on, and fell, and would have been lost, had her sister not pulled her back, saving her life, but tearing her clothes. Jeanie flew on Isabella to 'give it her' for spoiling her favorite's dress; Maidie rushed in between, crying out, 'Pay (whip) Maidjie as much as you like, and I'll not say one word; but touch Isy, and I'll roar like a bull!' Years after Maidie was resting in her grave, my mother used to take me to the place, and told the story always in the exact same words." This Jeanie must have been a character. She took great pride in exhibiting Maidie's brother William's Calvinistic acquirements, when nineteen months old, to the officers of a militia regiment then quartered in Kirkcaldy. This performance was so amusing that it was often repeated, and the little theologian was presented by them with a cap and feathers. Jeanie's glory was "putting him through the carritch" (catechism) in broad Scotch, beginning at the beginning with, "Wha made ye, ma bonnie man?" For the correctness of this and the three next replies Jeanie had no anxiety, but the tone changed to menace, and the closed *nieve* (fist) was shaken in the child's face as she demanded, "Of what

are you made?" "DIRT," was the answer uniformly given. "Wull ye never learn to say *dust*, ye thrawn deevil?" with a cuff from the opened hand, was the as inevitable rejoinder.

Here is Maidie's first letter before she was six. The spelling unaltered, and there are no "commoes."

"MY DEAR ISA, — I now sit down to answer all your kind and beloved letters which you was so good as to write to me. This is the first time I ever wrote a letter in my Life. There are a great many Girls in the Square and they cry just like a pig when we are under the painfull necessity of putting it to Death. Miss Potune a Lady of my acquaintance praises me dreadfully. I repeated something out of Dean Swift, and she said I was fit for the stage, and you may think I was primmed up with majestick Pride, but upon my word I felt myselfe turn a little birsay — birsay is a word which is a word that William composed which is as you may suppose a little enraged. This horrid fat simpliton says that my Aunt is beautifull which is intirely impossible for that is not her nature."

What a peppery little pen we wield! What could that have been out of the Sardonic Dean? what other child of that age would have used

"beloved" as she does? This power of affection, this faculty of *be*loving, and wild hunger to be beloved, comes out more and more. She perilled her all upon it, and it may have been as well — we know, indeed, that it was far better — for her that this wealth of love was so soon withdrawn to its one only infinite Giver and Receiver. This must have been the law of her earthly life. Love was indeed "her Lord and King"; and it was perhaps well for her that she found so soon that her and our only Lord and King himself is Love.

Here are bits from her Diary at Braehead: "The day of my existence here has been delightful and enchanting. On Saturday I expected no less than three well made Bucks the names of whom is here advertised. Mr. Geo. Crakey (Craigie), and Wm. Keith and Jn. Keith — the first is the funniest of every one of them. Mr. Crakey and walked to Crakyhall (Craigiehall) hand in hand in Innocence and matitation (meditation) sweet thinking on the kind love which flows in our tender hearted mind which is overflowing with majestic pleasure no one was ever so polite to me in the hole state of my existence. Mr. Craky you must know is a great Buck and pretty good-looking.

"I am at Ravelston enjoying nature's fresh air. The birds are singing sweetly — the calf doth frisk and nature shows her glorious face."

Here is a confession: "I confess I have been very more like a little young divil than a creature for when Isabella went up stairs to teach me religion and my multiplication and to be good and all my other lessons I stamped with my foot and threw my new hat which she had made on the ground and was sulky and was dreadfully passionate, but she never whiped me but said Marjory go into another room and think what a great crime you are committing letting your temper git the better of you. But I went so sulkily that the Devil got the better of me but she never never never whips me so that I think I would be the better of it and the next time that I behave ill I think she should do it for she never does it. . . . . Isabella has given me praise for checking my temper for I was sulky even when she was kneeling an hole hour teaching me to write."

Our poor little wifie, *she* has no doubts of the personality of the Devil! "Yesterday I behave extremely ill in God's most holy church for I would never attend myself nor let Isabella attend which was a great crime for she often,

often tells me that when to or three are geathered together God is in the midst of them, and it was the very same Divil that tempted Job that tempted me I am sure; but he resisted Satan though he had boils and many many other misfortunes which I have escaped. . . . . I am now going to tell you the horible and wretched plaege (plague) that my multiplication gives me you can't conceive it the most Devilish thing is 8 times 8 and 7 times 7 it is what nature itself cant endure."

This is delicious; and what harm is there in her "Devilish"? it is strong language merely; even old Rowland Hill used to say "he grudged the Devil those rough and ready words." "I walked to that delightful place Crakyhall with a delightful young man beloved by all his friends especially by me his loveress, but I must not talk any more about him for Isa said it is not proper for to speak of gentalmen but I will never forget him! . . . . I am very very glad that satan has not given me boils and many other misfortunes — In the holy bible these words are written that the Devil goes like a roaring lyon in search of his pray but the lord lets us escape from him but we" (*pauvre petite!*) "do not strive with this awfull Spirit.

. . . . To-day I pronunced a word which should never come out of a lady's lips it was that I called John a Impudent Bitch. I will tell you what I think made me in so bad a humor is I got one or two of that bad bad sina (senna) tea to-day," — a better excuse for bad humor and bad language than most.

She has been reading the Book of Esther: "It was a dreadful thing that Haman was hanged on the very gallows which he had prepared for Mordeca to hang him and his ten sons thereon and it was very wrong and cruel to hang his sons for they did not commit the crime; *but then Jesus was not then come to teach us to be merciful.*" This is wise and beautiful, — has upon it the very dew of youth and of holiness. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings He perfects his praise.

"This is Saturday and I am very glad of it because I have play half the Day and I get money too but alas I owe Isabella 4 pence for I am finned 2 pence whenever I bite my nails. Isabella is teaching me to make simme colings nots of interrigations peorids commoes, etc. . . . . As this is Sunday I will meditate upon Senciable and Religious subjects. First I should be very thankful I am not a begger."

This amount of meditation and thankfulness seems to have been all she was able for.

"I am going to-morrow to a delightfull place, Braehead by name, belonging to Mrs. Crraford, where there is ducks cocks hens bubblyjocks 2 dogs 2 cats and swine which is delightful. I think it is shocking to think that the dog and cat should bear them" (this is a meditation physiological), "and they are drowned after all. I would rather have a man-dog than a woman-dog, because they do not bear like women-dogs; it is a hard case — it is shocking. I cam here to enjoy natures delightful breath it is sweeter than a fial (phial) of rose oil."

Braehead is the farm the historical Jock Howison asked and got from our gay James the Fifth, "the gudeman o' Ballengiech," as a reward for the services of his flail when the King had the worst of it at Cramond Brig with the gypsies. The farm is unchanged in size from that time, and still in the unbroken line of the ready and victorious thrasher. Braehead is held on the condition of the possessor being ready to present the King with a ewer and basin to wash his hands, Jock having done this for his unknown king after the *splore*, and when George the Fourth came to Edinburgh

this ceremony was performed in silver at Holyrood. It is a lovely neuk this Braehead, preserved almost as it was two hundred years ago. "Lot and his wife," mentioned by Maidie, — two quaintly cropped yew-trees, — still thrive; the burn runs as it did in her time, and sings the same quiet tune, — as much the same and as different as *Now* and *Then*. The house full of old family relics and pictures, the sun shining on them through the small deep windows with their plate-glass; and there, blinking at the sun, and chattering contentedly, is a parrot, that might, for its looks of eld, have been in the ark, and domineered over and *deaved* the dove. Everything about the place is old and fresh.

This is beautiful: "I am very sorry to say that I forgot God — that is to say I forgot to pray to-day and Isabella told me that I should be thankful that God did not forget me — if he did, O what become of me if I was in danger and God not friends with me — I must go to unquenchable fire and if I was tempted to sin — how could I resist it O no I will never do it again — no no — if I can help it." (Canny wee wifie!) "My religion is greatly falling off because I dont pray with so much

attention when I am saying my prayers, and my charecter is lost among the Braehead people. I hope I will be religious again — but as for regaining my charecter I despare for it." (Poor little "habit and repute"-!)

Her temper, her passion, and her "badness" are almost daily confessed and deplored: "I will never again trust to my own power, for I see that I cannot be good without God's assistance — I will not trust in my own selfe, and Isa's health will be quite ruined by me — it will indeed." "Isa has giving me advice, which is, that when I feal Satan beginning to tempt me, that I flea him and he would flea me." "Remorse is the worst thing to bear, and I am afraid that I will fall a marter to it."

Poor dear little sinner! — Here comes the world again: "In my travels I met with a handsome lad named Charles Balfour Esq., and from him I got ofers of marage — offers of marage, did I say? Nay plenty heard me." A fine scent for "breach of promise"!

This is abrupt and strong: "The Divil is curced and all works. 'T is a fine work *Newton on the profecies.* I wonder if there is another book of poems comes near the Bible. The Divil always girns at the sight of the

Bible." "Miss Potune" (her "simpliton" friend) "is very fat; she pretends to be very learned. She says she saw a stone that dropt from the skies; but she is a good Christian." Here come her views on church government: "An Annibabtist is a thing I am not a member of — I am a Pisplekan (Episcopalian) just now, and" (O you little Laodicean and Latitudinarian!) "a Prisbeteran at Kirkcaldy!" — (*Blandula! Vagula! cœlum et animum mutas quæ trans mare* (i. e. *trans Bodotriam*)*-curris!*) — "my native town." "Sentiment is not what I am acquainted with as yet, though I wish it, and should like to practise it" (!) "I wish I had a great, great deal of gratitude in my heart, in all my body." "There is a new novel published, named *Self-Control*" (Mrs. Brunton's) — "a very good maxim forsooth!" This is shocking: "Yesterday a marrade man, named Mr. John Balfour, Esq., offered to kiss me, and offered to marry me, though the man" (a fine directness this!) "was espused, and his wife was present and said he must ask her permission; but he did not. I think he was ashamed and confounded before 3 gentelman — Mr. Jobson and 2 Mr. Kings." "Mr. Banester's" (Ban-

nister's) "Budjet is to-night; I hope it will be a good one. A great many authors have expressed themselves too sentimentally." You are right, Marjorie. "A Mr. Burns writes a beautiful song on Mr. Cunhaming, whose wife desarted him — truly it is a most beautiful one." "I like to read the Fabulous historys, about the histerys of Robin, Dickey, flapsay, and Peccay, and it is very amusing, for some were good birds and others bad, but Peccay was the most dutiful and obedient to her parients." "Thomson is a beautiful author, and Pope, but nothing to Shakespear, of which I have a little knolege. *Macbeth* is a pretty composition, but awful one." "The *Newgate Calender* is very instructive" (!) "A sailor called here to say farewell; it must be dreadful to leave his native country when he might get a wife; or perhaps me, for I love him very much. But O I forgot, Isabella forbid me to speak about love." This antiphlogistic regimen and lesson is ill to learn by our Maidie, for here she sins again: "Love is a very papithatick thing" (it is almost a pity to correct this into pathetic), "as well as troublesome and tiresome — but O Isabella forbid me to speak of it." Here are her reflections on a

pineapple: "I think the price of a pine-apple is very dear: it is a whole bright goulden guinea, that might have sustained a poor family." Here is a new vernal simile: "The hedges are sprouting like chicks from the eggs when they are newly hatched or, as the vulgar say, *clacked*." "Doctor Swift's works are very funny; I got some of them by heart." "Moreheads sermons are I hear much praised, but I never read sermons of any kind; but I read novelettes and my Bible, and I never forget it, or my prayers." Bravo, Marjorie!

She seems now, when still about six, to have broken out into song: —

EPHIBOL (EPIGRAM OR EPITAPH — WHO KNOWS WHICH?) ON MY DEAR LOVE ISABELLA.

"Here lies sweet Isabell in bed,
With a night-cap on her head;
Her skin is soft, her face is fair,
And she has very pretty hair;
She and I in bed lies nice,
And undisturbed by rats or mice;
She is disgusted with Mr. Worgan,
Though he plays upon the organ.
Her nails are neat, her teeth are white,
Her eyes are very, very bright;
In a conspicuous town she lives,
And to the poor her money gives:
Here ends sweet Isabella's story,
And may it be much to her glory."

Here are some bits at random: —

"Of summer I am very fond,
And love to bathe into a pond;
The look of sunshine dies away,
And will not let me out to play;
I love the morning's sun to spy
Glittering through the casement's eye,
The rays of light are very sweet,
And puts away the taste of meat;
The balmy breeze comes down from heaven,
And makes us like for to be living."

"The casawary is an curious bird, and so is the gigantic crane, and the pelican of the wilderness, whose mouth holds a bucket of fish and water. Fighting is what ladies is not qualyfied for, they would not make a good figure in battle or in a duel. Alas! we females are of little use to our country. The history of all the malcontents as ever was hanged is amusing." Still harping on the Newgate Calendar!

"Braehead is extremely pleasant to me by the companie of swine, geese, cocks, etc., and they are the delight of my soul."

"I am going to tell you of a melancholy story. A young turkie of 2 or 3 months old, would you believe it, the father broke its leg, and he killed another! I think he ought to be transported or hanged."

"Queen Street is a very gay one, and so is Princes Street, for all the lads and lasses, besides bucks and beggars, parade there."

"I should like to see a play very much, for I never saw one in all my life, and don't believe I ever shall; but I hope I can be content without going to one. I can be quite happy without my desire being granted."

"Some days ago Isabella had a terrible fit of the toothake, and she walked with a long night-shift at dead of night like a ghost, and I thought she was one. She prayed for nature's sweet restorer — balmy sleep — but did not get it — a ghostly figure indeed she was, enough to make a saint tremble. It made me quiver and shake from top to toe. Superstition is a very mean thing, and should be despised and shunned."

Here is her weakness and her strength again: "In the love-novels all the heroines are very desperate. Isabella will not allow me to speak about lovers and heroins, and 't is too refined for my taste." "Miss Egward's (Edgeworth's) tails are very good, particularly some that are very much adapted for youth (!) as Laz Laurance and Tarelton, False Keys, etc. etc."

"Tom Jones and Grey's Elegey in a country churchyard are both excellent, and much spoke of by both sex, particularly by the men." Are our Marjories nowadays better or worse because they cannot read Tom Jones unharmed? More better than worse; but who among them can repeat Gray's Lines on a Distant Prospect of Eton College as could our Maidie?

Here is some more of her prattle: "I went into Isabella's bed to make her smile like the Genius Demedicus" (the Venus de Medicis) "or the statute in an ancient Greece, but she fell asleep in my very face, at which my anger broke forth, so that I awoke her from a comfortable nap. All was now hushed up again, but again my anger burst forth at her biding me get up."

She begins thus loftily, —

> "Death the righteous love to see,
> But from it doth the wicked flee."

Then suddenly breaks off (as if with laughter), —

"I am sure they fly as fast as their legs can carry them!"

> "There is a thing I love to see,
> That is our monkey catch a flee."

"I love in Isa's bed to lie,
Oh, such a joy and luxury!
The bottom of the bed I sleep,
And with great care within I creep;
Oft I embrace her feet of lillys,
But she has goton all the pillys.
Her neck I never can embrace,
But I do hug her feet in place."

How childish and yet how strong and free is her use of words! "I lay at the foot of the bed because Isabella said I disturbed her by continial fighting and kicking, but I was very dull, and continially at work reading the Arabian Nights, which I could not have done if I had slept at the top. I am reading the Mysteries of Udolpho. I am much interested in the fate of poor, poor Emily."

Here is one of her swains: —

"Very soft and white his cheeks,
His hair is red, and grey his breeks;
His tooth is like the daisy fair,
His only fault is in his hair."

This is a higher flight: —

"DEDICATED TO MRS. H. CRAWFORD BY THE AUTHOR, M. F.

"Three turkeys fair their last have breathed,
And now this world forever leaved;
Their father, and their mother too,
They sigh and weep as well as you;
Indeed, the rats their bones have crunched,

Into eternity theire laanched.
A direful death indeed they had,
As wad put any parent mad;
But she was more than usual calm,
She did not give a single dam."

This last word is saved from all sin by its tender age, not to speak of the want of the *n*. We fear "she" is the abandoned mother, in spite of her previous sighs and tears.

"Isabella says when we pray we should pray fervently, and not rattel over a prayer — for that we are kneeling at the footstool of our Lord and Creator, who saves us from eternal damnation, and from unquestionable fire and brimston."

She has a long poem on Mary Queen of Scots: —

"Queen Mary was much loved by all,
Both by the great and by the small,
But hark! her soul to heaven doth rise!
And I suppose she has gained a prize —
For I do think she would not go
Into the *awful* place below;
There is a thing that I must tell,
Elizabeth went to fire and hell;
He who would teach her to be civil,
It must be her great friend the divil!"

She hits off Darnley well: —

"A noble's son, a handsome lad,
By some queer way or other, had

Got quite the better of her heart,
With him she always talked apart;
Silly he was, but very fair,
A greater buck was not found there."

"By some queer way or other"; is not this the general case and the mystery, young ladies and gentlemen? Goethe's doctrine of "elective affinities" discovered by our Pet Maidie.

SONNET TO A MONKEY.

"O lively, O most charming pug
Thy graceful air, and heavenly mug;
The beauties of his mind do shine,
And every bit is shaped and fine.
Your teeth are whiter than the snow,
Your a great buck, your a great beau;
Your eyes are of so nice a shape,
More like a Christian's than an ape;
Your cheek is like the rose's blume,
Your hair is like the raven's plume;
His nose's cast is of the Roman,
He is a very pretty woman.
I could not get a rhyme for Roman,
So was obliged to call him woman."

This last joke is good. She repeats it when writing of James the Second being killed at Roxburgh: —

"He was killed by a cannon splinter,
Quite in the middle of the winter;
Perhaps it was not at that time,
But I can get no other rhyme!"

Here is one of her last letters, dated Kirkcaldy, 12th October, 1811. You can see how her nature is deepening and enriching: "My Dear Mother, — You will think that I entirely forget you but I assure you that you are greatly mistaken. I think of you always and often sigh to think of the distance between us two loving creatures of nature. We have regular hours for all our occupations first at 7 o'clock we go to the dancing and come home at 8 we then read our Bible and get our repeating and then play till ten then we get our music till 11 when we get our writing and accounts we sew from 12 till 1 after which I get my gramer and then work till five. At 7 we come and knit till 8 when we dont go to the dancing. This is an exact description. I must take a hasty farewell to her whom I love, reverence and doat on and who I hope thinks the same of

"Marjory Fleming.

"*P. S.* — An old pack of cards (!) would be very exeptible."

This other is a month earlier: "My dear little Mama, — I was truly happy to hear that you were all well. We are surrounded

with measles at present on every side, for the Herons got it, and Isabella Heron was near Death's Door, and one night her father lifted her out of bed, and she fell down as they thought lifeless. Mr. Heron said, 'That lassie 's deed noo' — 'I 'm no deed yet.' She then threw up a big worm nine inches and a half long. I have begun dancing, but am not very fond of it, for the boys strikes and mocks me. — I have been another night at the dancing; I like it better. I will write to you as often as I can; but I am afraid not every week. *I long for you with the longings of a child to embrace you — to fold you in my arms. I respect you with all the respect due to a mother. You dont know how I love you. So I shall remain, your loving child* — M. FLEMING."

What rich involution of love in the words marked! Here are some lines to her beloved Isabella, in July, 1811: —

"There is a thing that I do want,
With you these beauteous walks to haunt,
We would be happy if you would
Try to come over if you could.
Then I would all quite happy be
Now and for all eternity.
My mother is so very sweet,
And checks my appetite to eat;

My father shows us what to do;
But O I 'm sure that I want you.
I have no more of poetry;
O Isa do remember me,
And try to love your Marjory."

In a letter from "Isa" to

"Miss Muff Maidie Marjory Fleming.
favored by Rare Rear-Admiral Fleming,"

she says: "I long much to see you, and talk over all our old stories together, and to hear you read and repeat. I am pining for my old friend Cesario, and poor Lear, and wicked Richard. How is the dear Multiplication table going on? are you still as much attached to 9 times 9 as you used to be?"

But this dainty, bright thing is about to flee, — to come "quick to confusion." The measles she writes of seized her, and she died on the 19th of December, 1811. The day before her death, Sunday, she sat up in bed, worn and thin, her eye gleaming as with the light of a coming world, and with a tremulous, old voice repeated the following lines by Burns, — heavy with the shadow of death, and lit with the fantasy of the judgment-seat, — the publican's prayer in paraphrase: —

"Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?

Some drops of joy, with draughts of ill between,
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms.
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for GUILT my terrors are in arms;
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

"Fain would I say, forgive my foul offence,
Fain promise never more to disobey;
But should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might forsake fair virtue's way,
Again in folly's path might go astray,
Again exalt the brute and sink the man.
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan,
"Who sin so oft have mourned, yet to temptation ran?

"O thou great Governor of all below,
If I might dare a lifted eye to thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
And still the tumult of the raging sea;
With that controlling power assist even me
Those headstrong furious passions to confine,
For all unfit I feel my powers to be
To rule their torrent in the allowed line;
O aid me with thy help, OMNIPOTENCE DIVINE."

It is more affecting than we care to say to read her mother's and Isabella Keith's letters written immediately after her death. Old and withered, tattered and pale, they are now: but when you read them, how quick, how throbbing with life and love! how rich in that language of affection which only women, and

Shakespeare, and Luther can use, — that power of detaining the soul over the beloved object and its loss.

"*K. Philip to Constance.*
You are as fond of grief as of your child.
Const. Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form.
Then I have reason to be fond of grief."

What variations cannot love play on this one string!

In her first letter to Miss Keith, Mrs. Fleming says of her dead Maidie: "Never did I behold so beautiful an object. It resembled the finest wax-work. There was in the countenance an expression of sweetness and serenity which seemed to indicate that the pure spirit had anticipated the joys of heaven ere it quitted the mortal frame. To tell you what your Maidie said of you would fill volumes; for you was the constant theme of her discourse, the subject of her thoughts, and ruler of her actions. The last time she mentioned you was a few hours before all sense save that of suffering was suspended, when she said to Dr. Johnstone, 'If you will let me out at the New Year, I will

be quite contented.' I asked what made her so anxious to get out then. 'I want to purchase a New Year's gift for Isa Keith with the sixpence you gave me for being patient in the measles; and I would like to choose it myself.' I do not remember her speaking afterwards, except to complain of her head, till just before she expired, when she articulated, 'O mother! mother!'"

Do we make too much of this little child, who has been in her grave in Abbotshall Kirkyard these fifty and more years? We may of her cleverness, — not of her affectionateness, her nature. What a picture the *animosa infans* gives us of herself, her vivacity, her passionateness, her precocious love-making, her passion for nature, for swine, for all living things, her reading, her turn for expression, her satire, her frankness, her little sins and rages, her great repentances! We don't wonder Walter Scott carried her off in the neuk of his plaid, and played himself with her for hours.

The year before she died, when in Edinburgh, she was at a Twelfth Night supper at Scott's, in Castle Street. The company had all come, — all but Marjorie. Scott's familiars, whom we all

know, were there, — all were come but Marjorie; and all were dull because Scott was dull. "Where 's that bairn? what can have come over her? I'll go myself and see." And he was getting up, and would have gone, when the bell rang, and in came Duncan Roy and his henchman Tougald, with the sedan-chair, which was brought right into the lobby, and its top raised. And there, in its darkness and dingy old cloth, sat Maidie in white, her eyes gleaming, and Scott bending over her in ecstasy, — "hung over her enamored." "Sit ye there, my dautie, till they all see you"; and forthwith he brought them all. You can fancy the scene. And he lifted her up and marched to his seat with her on his stout shoulder, and set her down beside him; and then began the night, and such a night! Those who knew Scott best said that night was never equalled; Maidie and he were the stars; and she gave them Constance's speeches and *Helvellyn*, the ballad then much in vogue, and all her *répertoire*, — Scott showing her off, and being ofttimes rebuked by her for his intentional blunders.

We are indebted for the following — and our readers will be not unwilling to share our

obligations — to her sister: "Her birth was 15th January, 1803; her death, 19th December, 1811. I take this from her Bibles.* I believe she was a child of robust health, of much vigor of body, and beautifully formed arms, and until her last illness, never was an hour in bed. She was niece to Mrs. Keith, residing in No. 1 North Charlotte Street, who was *not* Mrs. Murray Keith, although very intimately acquainted with that old lady. My aunt was a daughter of Mr. James Rae, surgeon, and married the younger son of old Keith of Ravelstone. Corstorphine Hill belonged to my aunt's husband; and his eldest son, Sir Alexander Keith, succeeded his uncle to both Ravelstone and Dunnottar. The Keiths were not connected by relationship with the Howisons of Braehead; but my grandfather and grandmother (who was), a daughter of Cant of Thurston and Giles-Grange, were on the most intimate footing with *our* Mrs. Keith's grandfather and grandmother; and so it has been for three generations, and the friendship consummated by my cousin William Keith marrying Isabella Craufurd.

* "Her Bible is before me; *a pair*, as then called; the faded marks are just as she placed them. There is one at David's lament over Jonathan."

"As to my aunt and Scott, they were on a very intimate footing. He asked my aunt to be godmother to his eldest daughter, Sophia Charlotte. I had a copy of Miss Edgeworth's 'Rosamond, and Harry and Lucy' for long, which was 'a gift to Marjorie from Walter Scott,' probably the first edition of that attractive series, for it wanted 'Frank,' which is always now published as part of the series, under the title of *Early Lessons*. I regret to say these little volumes have disappeared."

"Sir Walter was no relation of Marjorie's, but of the Keiths, through the Swintons; and, like Marjorie, he stayed much at Ravelstone in his early days, with his grand-aunt Mrs. Keith; and it was while seeing him there as a boy, that another aunt of mine composed, when he was about fourteen, the lines prognosticating his future fame that Lockhart ascribes in his Life to Mrs. Cockburn, authoress of 'The Flowers of the Forest': —

'Go on, dear youth, the glorious path pursue
Which bounteous Nature kindly smooths for you;
Go bid the seeds her hands have sown arise,
By timely culture, to their native skies;
Go, and employ the poet's heavenly art,
Not merely to delight, but mend the heart.'

Mrs. Keir was my aunt's name, another of Dr.

Rae's daughters." We cannot better end than in words from this same pen: "I have to ask you to forgive my anxiety in gathering up the fragments of Marjorie's last days, but I have an almost sacred feeling to all that pertains to her. You are quite correct in stating that measles were the cause of her death. My mother was struck by the patient quietness manifested by Marjorie during this illness, unlike her ardent, impulsive nature; but love and poetic feeling were unquenched. When Dr. Johnstone rewarded her submissiveness with a sixpence, the request speedily followed that she might get out ere New Year's day came. When asked why she was so desirous of getting out, she immediately rejoined, 'O, I am so anxious to buy something with my sixpence for my dear Isa Keith.' Again, when lying very still, her mother asked her if there was anything she wished: 'O yes! if you would just leave the room door open a wee bit, and play "The Land o' the Leal," and I will lie and *think*, and enjoy myself' (this is just as stated to me by her mother and mine). Well, the happy day came, alike to parents and child, when Marjorie was allowed to come forth from the nursery to the parlor. It was Sabbath even-

ing, and after tea. My father, who idolized this child, and never afterwards in my hearing mentioned her name, took her in his arms; and while walking her up and down the room, she said, 'Father, I will repeat something to you; what would you like?' He said, 'Just choose yourself, Maidie.' She hesitated for a moment between the paraphrase, 'Few are thy days, and full of woe,' and the lines of Burns already quoted, but decided on the latter, a remarkable choice for a child. The repeating these lines seemed to stir up the depths of feeling in her soul. She asked to be allowed to write a poem; there was a doubt whether it would be right to allow her, in case of hurting her eyes. She pleaded earnestly, 'Just this once'; the point was yielded, her slate was given her, and with great rapidity she wrote an address of fourteen lines, 'to her loved cousin on the author's recovery,' her last work on earth: —

'Oh! Isa, pain did visit me,
I was at the last extremity;
How often did I think of you,
I wished your graceful form to view,
To clasp you in my weak embrace,
Indeed I thought I'd run my race:
Good care, I'm sure, was of me taken,

But still indeed I was much shaken,
At last I daily strength did gain,
And oh! at last, away went pain;
At length the doctor thought I might
Stay in the parlor all the night;
I now continue so to do,
Farewell to Nancy and to you.'

She went to bed apparently well, awoke in the middle of the night with the old cry of woe to a mother's heart, 'My head, my head!' Three days of the dire malady, 'water in the head,' followed, and the end came."

"Soft, silken primrose, fading timelessly."

It is needless, it is impossible, to add anything to this: the fervor, the sweetness, the flush of poetic ecstasy, the lovely and glowing eye, the perfect nature of that bright and warm intelligence, that darling child, — Lady Nairne's words, and the old tune, stealing up from the depths of the human heart, deep calling unto deep, gentle and strong like the waves of the great sea hushing themselves to sleep in the dark; — the words of Burns touching the kindred chord, her last numbers "wildly sweet" traced, with thin and eager fingers, already touched by the last enemy and friend, — *moriens canit*, — and that love which is so

soon to be her everlasting light, is her song's burden to the end.

"She set as sets the morning star, which goes
Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven."

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